



Creating a Fall Proof Environment in Your Home

Our home is our haven, a place where we feel safe and secure. Unfortunately, our home may also contain unsuspected hazards - hazards that could potentially contribute to devastating falls. Falls in the home and community are a leading cause of unintentional-injury deaths in the United States.

Fall-Proofing for the Elderly

Although all age groups are vulnerable to falls, older adults are most at risk. In fact, more than 80% of those fatally injured from falls are over the age of 65. Follow these tips to protect yourself and your aging relatives:

- Start a regular exercise program to increase balance and strength.
- Keep the floor clear. Reduce clutter and safely tuck telephone and electrical cords out of walkways.
- Use non-skid throw rugs to reduce your chance of slipping on wood, ceramic tile or linoleum floors. Or secure area rugs with a piece of foam carpet backing or double-sided tape.
- Install handrails on both sides in stairways. Mount grab bars in the bathroom near toilets and in the tub and shower.
- Keep the floor clean. Mop up grease, water and other liquids immediately. Don't wax floors.
- Make sure living areas are well lit.
- Have your eyes checked regularly.
- Keep items handy and use a sturdy step stool with handrails if it is necessary to climb or reach high places.
- Follow medication doses closely and review all of your medicines with your physician. Incorrect usage and multiple medications may cause dizziness, weakness and other side effects.
- Minor falls now can mean more serious falls in the future. See your doctor if you notice changes in balance and stability.

Keeping Kids Safe from Falls

It's difficult to keep up with the boundless energy of an active child. However, by following these tips, you can help protect your little ones from potential fall hazards throughout your home:

- Never leave babies alone on beds, changing tables or sofas.
- Always strap children into high chairs and strollers.
- Keep stairs clean and free of clutter.
- Use safety gates for infants and toddlers. At the top of stairs, attach the gate to a wall. Avoid accordion gates with large openings, as a child's head can get trapped.
- Keep windows and doors locked. When opening windows for ventilation, open only those that a child cannot reach.
- Keep furniture (or anything children can climb) away from windows. Children may use such objects as climbing aids.
- Always use a rubber mat or slip resistant stickers in the tub.

For additional information on falls, visit the National Safety Council's Website at <http://www.nsc.org>.

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